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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m.

The Chaplain, Rev. James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

Oh, gracious and loving God, as we come together in this time of prayer, we celebrate the diversity of our own lives and in the lives of the people around us.

As we see the differences in our own heritage and in our own histories, we are grateful that we can learn from each other, tell our stories and ideas and traditions and deepen our understanding of our shared humanity.

Even as we see that which makes us distinctive, so at that moment we marvel at the beauty of Your mighty creation and the grandeur and the miracle that You have made us as one people. Bless us this day and every day we pray. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Washington (Ms. DUNN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. DUNN led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL FOR THE REAGANS

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, next week, the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. DUNN) and I will introduce legislation to award the Congressional Gold Medal to former President and First Lady, Ronald and Nancy Reagan, in recognition of their distinguished record of service to the United States.

I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join us in commemorating the Reagans and their service to our great Nation.

Under President Reagan's leadership, the United States experienced unprecedented economic growth and gained a renewed sense of national pride.

Known as the Great Communicator, Ronald Reagan maintained his unique poise and uncanny wit during his tenure in office and throughout his life.

His wife, Nancy, served as gracious First Lady and as the tireless leader of the well-known anti-drug "Just Say No" campaign. She held her own.

Together, the Reagans have been dedicated to promoting national pride and improving the quality of life in America. Ronald Reagan will celebrate his 89th birthday this weekend. Awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to the Reagans would certainly make a wonderful birthday gift; but more importantly, the award would be a fitting tribute for their contributions to our country.

DEPLORING NEOFASCISM IN AUSTRIA

(Mr. LANTOS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on whatever side my colleagues were last night in the New Hampshire primary, I am calling on all of them to join me as I introduce a resolution this morning with respect to the outrageous neofascist developments in Austria.

Austria for decades paraded as Hitler's first victim, when in point in fact

Austria was Hitler's first ally. Now, the neo-Nazi leader is about to be admitted to the Austrian government. All other 14 nations of the European Union are downgrading diplomatic relations with Austria, and my resolution calls for a voluntary boycott of tourism to Austria, the purchase of Austrian products, the use of Austrian Airlines, and the downgrading of our own diplomatic relations with Austria.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a time to introduce fascism into the New Europe. I applaud the European leadership for denouncing this outrageous neofascist development.

MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

(Mr. KNOLLENBERG asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remind my colleagues of the fact that the Committee on Ways and Means is marking up marriage penalty relief and also to talk about the negative impact of the marriage penalty.

Under current law, 21 million couples are required to pay on average an additional \$1,400 a year in taxes simply because they are married. The marriage penalty is a ridiculous policy that is undermining the institution of marriage and making it harder for working families to get ahead.

Mr. Speaker, the marriage penalty is especially hard on the family's second wage earner, often the wife's salary, because their income is taxed at higher marginal rates. In response to these higher rates, many people, especially the second earners, choose not to work or to work less. This not only makes these couples worse off because of their decreased income, because it also reduces the national output. In short, the marriage penalty punishes success.

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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I commend the leadership for making the marriage penalty relief a top priority, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pass this common-sense legislation.

HONORING MONROE SWEETLAND

(Mr. BLUMENAUER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, as the voters of New Hampshire salvage some dignity from the presidential nominating process, it was keenly observed in Oregon by Monroe Sweetland, the father of Oregon's modern Democratic Party.

Last month in Portland, we gathered to celebrate his 90th birthday. Although a partisan Democrat, he was introduced at this gathering by his good friend, Republican Senator Mark Hatfield.

Monroe was a confidant of Eleanor Roosevelt and ally of President Truman. He was in Indonesia during "the year of living dangerously" and then returned to the United States to be political director for Western States of the NEA for over a decade.

Monroe is a journalist, State senator, and small businessman who last year ran a very competitive race for State senate. Legally blind for years, his slogan was that his eyesight may be dim, but his vision is clear. I am proud of the many contributions of this great man and look forward to his next decade of public service. He shows how politics should be conducted while living life to the fullest.

ELIAN GONZALEZ AND FAITH

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, weak and thirsty, Elizabeth spent the last hours of her life praying to God to protect her son, Elian; to guide him to safety in the land of liberty. She shaded Elian with her own body, gave him bottled water so he would not dehydrate, did everything humanly possible so that he would live.

As darkness enveloped her frail body and before she disappeared into the depths of the Atlantic, she turned to Elian and said to him, "My child, remember that prayer I taught you? Pray to your guardian angel. Ask him to watch over you, for you are in God's hands now."

Elizabeth succumbed to the power of the sea, but Elian continued to pray and; on Thanksgiving Day, he would be saved under what one of his rescuers has classified as miraculous circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, one cannot help but wonder if there was divine intervention. As former President Ronald Reagan has said: without God, there is no prompting of the conscience.

So I ask my colleagues to search their conscience and consider what is

right and just before making a decision on Elian's case. We can still hear his mother's last wishes from the depths of the sea.

IRS INVESTIGATED

(Mr. TRAFICANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, after destroying lives and ruining families for years, reports now say that the IRS is being investigated for targeting political opponents. Being one, I find it amusing that all of the sudden files are missing, agents have amnesia, and evidence just cannot be found.

Truth is, the IRS has been lying through their teeth for so long, they need braces. Think about it. Little Punxsutawney Phil can find his shadow, but the big bad IRS cannot find their laptops.

Beam me up, Mr. Speaker.

It is time to abolish both the income tax and the IRS. Replace it with a national retail sales tax.

Mr. Speaker, one last thing. I yield back the lies, crimes, dental needs, and amnesia of the "Internal Rectal Service."

CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL FOR RONALD AND NANCY REAGAN

(Ms. DUNN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DUNN. Mr. Speaker, on February 6, Ronald Reagan will be celebrating his 89th birthday. To commemorate this occasion, I will be joining my colleague, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS), in introducing legislation to award the Congressional Gold Medal to Ronald and Nancy Reagan.

Together with his devoted First Lady, Ronald Reagan believed in the promise of the American dream. In an era of growing cynicism, the Reagans worked in their own optimistic, upbeat way to make America a place where everyone can rise as high and as far as her ability will take her.

In 1989, I had an opportunity personally to thank Ronald Reagan for his contributions to America. This was shortly after the Berlin Wall was taken down and the land he once declared an "evil empire" began to be dissolved. Now is the time to broaden this "thank you" so that it comes from all the American people.

Mr. Speaker, we can begin this process here in the Congress in a bipartisan way by awarding him and his First Lady the Congressional Gold Medal.

Mr. and Mrs. Reagan, this "thank you" is long overdue.

GOOD POLICY MAKES GOOD POLITICS

(Mr. KIND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the winners in the New Hampshire primary yesterday: Vice President AL GORE and Senator JOHN MCCAIN. Let us be truthful, there are consistencies in their message that the voters are obviously responding to, one of which is the need to clean up the campaign finance mess that exists here in Washington, D.C. The other is their fiscally responsible message that I believe both of these individuals are delivering to sustain economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, it is a message that says before we get carried away with these projected budget surpluses, we still have existing obligations that we need to take care of. Obligations such as shoring up Social Security, Medicare, paying down the \$5.7 trillion national debt, before we embark on large new tax cuts or large new spending programs.

In short, good policy is making good politics in these campaigns. Perhaps it would be wise for us Members in this chamber to wake up and realize what the American people are responding to and embracing, and work in a bipartisan fashion to address these very crucial issues before we embark on irresponsible fiscal policy in the coming year.

CIVILIANS MURDERED IN INDONESIA

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about what is happening to the people of Ambon in Indonesia. Over 2,000 people have been killed in the past few months; hundreds have been severely wounded; dozens of churches have been burned, all as a result of fighting in Ambon and approximately 1,000 extremists having traveled to the area to wage jihad on the inhabitants.

Unfortunately, the Indonesian military has played a role in the death and terrorizing of civilians. In one report, a church was being guarded by its congregation when soldiers arrived. The military went into the church, started shooting, killed 24 men, dragged the bodies outside and burned them beyond recognition. The soldiers apparently belonged to the elite strategic reserve command and the paramilitary police.

Observers in local hospitals have heard numerous stories of people shot by soldiers of the Indonesian army.

Mr. Speaker, I commend President Wahid for his efforts to end this violence and I urge him to take the needed steps to bring the military under control and to bring to justice those responsible for brutally murdering innocent civilians.